

Hookah Fact Sheet

- Hookah is a popular method of smoking flavored tobacco or other substance in a waterpipe. While some may believe this form of smoking is less harmful than cigarettes, studies from the American Lung Association and the World Health Organization prove that it may be even more harmful.
- A typical hour-long hookah smoking session involves breathing 100-200 times the volume of smoke inhaled in a single cigarette. This amount is roughly equivalent to smoking 100 cigarettes.
- Mainstream smoke from hookah waterpipes contains a significant amount of tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide and heavy metals.
- Compared to cigarettes, hookah waterpipe users inhale higher carbon monoxide levels and 1.7 times the dose of nicotine.
- Hookah smoking presents a danger to nonusers through secondhand exposure to toxins. Hookah smoke emits dangerous levels of fine particulate air pollution and carbon monoxide from the heat source (often charcoal).
- Both national and local air quality studies in hookah lounges have found levels of aerosolized respirable particulate matter (PM2.5) directly comparable to those in establishments that allow cigarette smoking which far exceed the ambient air quality standards established by the EPA.
- A study done in Lexington Kentucky showed that secondhand smoke from hookah waterpipe smoking created high fine particulate concentrations that were three to six times higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for **outdoor** air.
- Studies of tobacco-based shisha and even non-tobacco “herbal” shisha show that smoke from both preparations contain carbon monoxide and other toxic agents known to increase the risks for smoking-related cancers, heart disease, and lung disease.
- Sharing the hookah can also lead to the spread of communicable diseases through shared saliva, such as hepatitis, meningitis, and tuberculosis.
- Babies born to women who smoked hookahs every day while pregnant weigh less at birth (at least 3½ ounces less) than babies born to nonsmokers. Babies born to hookah smokers are also at increased risk for respiratory diseases.